GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HOME AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:7142
ANSWERED ON:14.05.2002
ABOLITION OF DEVDASI SYSTEM
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Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that lakhs of Dalit women are being forced into Devdasi system in several States in the country as reported in the `The Pioneer` dated April 22, 2002;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter reported therein;

(c) whether the Government have caused any probe into the prevalence of this system in different States;

(d) if so, the outcome thereof, State-wise;

(e) whether the census of 1981, 1991 and 2001 revealed any figures about the number of such women/girls engaged as Devdasis;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) the steps being taken by the Government to abolish the system?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI I. D. SWAMI)

(a) & (b): The Devdasi system which was prevalent in some parts of Andhra Pradesh,Karnataka and Maharashtra has been legally banned. Despite this, there are some reports that dedication in the name of God still continues clandestinely.

(c) to (g): The Government of India has not conducted any survey on Devdasis as the problem is of a localised nature. The State Governments of Andhra pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra have, however, conducted surveys on Devdasis in their respective States. The number of Devdasis (also called Jogins/ Basivs/Parvathis in different areas) as revealed from the surveys is as under:

1. Andhra Pradesh 16,624

2. Karnataka 15,489

3. Maharashtra 5,496

The practice of Devdasis is banned in the three States by
(i) The Andhra Pradesh Devdasi (Prohibition of Dedication) Act, 1988
(ii) The Karnataka Devdasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Act, 1987 and
(iii) The Maharashtra Devdasis (Abolition and Rehabilitation) Act, 2001.

The following welfare schemes are being operated by these State Governments for the rehabilitation of Devdasis

1. Andhra Pradesh

(i) An economic package of Rs. 10,000 in fixed deposit with monthly interest payable to jogins towards their subsistence.

(ii) A house under weaker section housing under IAY.

(iii) Admission of children in Social Welfare Residential Schools and hostels.

(iv) Provision of White Ration Card and

(v) Providing economic support under land purchase scheme, milch cattle and other petty business through DRDA.

2. Karnataka

(i) Training in skill development through courses in different vacations like handloom weaving, agarbatti making and tailoring etc to able bodied Devdasis in the age group of 18-25 years. This is subsequently linked to marketing centres after formation of Indistrial Cooperative Units in various trades.

(ii) Imparting of social and moral education.

(iii) Health care with emphasis on research and coordination.

(iv) Admission in residential schools for children of Devdasis.

3. Maharashtra

(i) Pension @ Rs. 300/- per month to Devdasis of about 40 years of age and income below Rs. 15,000/- P.A.

(ii) Rs. 10.000/- financial assistance for marriage of unmarried Devdasi or Devdasi`s daughter.

(iii) Training centres for economical rehabilitation.

(iv) Hostel for children of Devdasis. Grant-in-aid of Rs. 500/- per month per child.

(v) Free school education and free uniform for children.

(vi) 25% seed capital for entrepreneurs on bank loan up to Rs. 35,000/-